

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method comprising the steps of:
accessing a central site to obtain a steganographically-encoded item, the item including at least a unique identifier;
applying the steganographically-encoded item to a document; and
inputting data relating to a proprietor of the document, the data being input into a database, and associating the data with the unique identifier.
2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the document is a business card.
3. The method according to claim 1, wherein the document comprises one of a sticker, résumé, label, brochure, post-it, envelope, stationary, and letterhead.
4. The method according to claim 1, wherein the data is formatted into a standardized format.
5. The method according to claim 4, wherein the standardized format comprises a vCard.
6. The method according to claim 1, wherein the data comprises audio or visual data.
7. The method according to claim 1, wherein the data comprises pronunciation data.
8. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of translating the data into a different language.
9. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of providing an audio pronunciation of the stored data.

10. The method according to claim 1, wherein the steganographically-encoded item comprises one of a background, tint, graphic, shading, logo, text or font.

11. The method according to claim 1, wherein the steganographically-encoded item comprises a business card.

12. The method according to claim 1, wherein the steganographically-encoded item includes an electronic address associated with the central site.

13. A method of doing business comprising the steps of:
providing a watermarked item for integration with a business card, the watermarked item including a unique identifier associated with an internet database;
receiving data in the internet database, the received data corresponding to a proprietor of the business card;
associating the received data with the unique identifier; and
permitting access to the received data in the internet database when presented with the unique identifier.

14. The method according to claim 13, wherein the received data includes a current contact-channel.

15. The method according to claim 14, wherein the current contact-channel comprises an immediate contact number.

16. The method according to claim 13, further comprising the step of providing a digital file comprising a pronunciation of at least some of the received data.

17. The method according to claim 13, further comprising the step of providing a digital file comprising a translation of at least some of the received data.

18. The method according to claim 13, further comprising the step of standardizing the format of the received data.

19. The method according to claim 18, wherein the format comprises a vCard.

20. The method according to claim 13, further comprising the step of notifying a card-recipient when the received data changes.

21. The method according to claim 13, wherein the watermarked item further includes an address associated with the internet database.

22. A system comprising:
a central computer, said central computer communicating with a network;
a database in communication with the central computer, the database indexing user data according to unique identifiers;
a gallery of items maintained by the central computer, each item capable of hosting encoded data;
an encoder to steganographically-encode a unique identifier per item of the gallery of items; and
an interface through which at least one user can access the gallery items and database.

23. The system according to claim 22, wherein the gallery of items comprises at least one of background, tints, shading, graphics, text, fonts, and logos.

24. The system according to claim 22, wherein the encoder encodes an address of the system per item of the gallery of items.

25. The system according to claim 22, wherein a unique identifier is communicated to a user.

26. A method of linking data to a document comprising the steps of:
registering at least one document-giver with an on-line registration server and
assigning the document-giver a unique identifier;
steganographically-encoding the unique identifier into an item to be incorporated with
a printed document associated with the document-giver;
receiving information related to the card-giver into a database associated with the on-
line registration server; and
transferring the related information upon receipt of the unique identifier.

27. The method according to claim 26, wherein the document comprises one of a
business card, résumé, envelope, stationary, label, post-it, letterhead, brochure and sticker.

28. The method according to claim 26, further comprising the steps of:
presenting the document to an optical sensor at a first terminal, the optical sensor
producing output data;
decoding the steganographically-encoded unique identifier from the sensor output
data;
establishing a link with the on-line registration server;
and
transferring the document-giver's received information from the on-line registration
server to the first terminal.

29. The method according to claim 28, wherein the document-giver's received
information comprises at least one of audio files, video files, contact information, and audio
pronunciation data.

30. The method according to claim 26, further comprising the step of transferring
the received information from the on-line registration server to a first terminal.

31. The method according to claim 30, wherein the received information is
transferred in a standardized format.

32. The method according to claim 31, wherein the standardized format comprises a vCard.

33. A method of linking data to a business card comprising the steps of:
registering at least one card-giver with an on-line registration server and assigning the card-giver a unique identifier;
steganographically-encoding the unique identifier and an address of the on-line registration server into an item to be incorporated with a business card associated with the card-giver;
receiving information related to the card-giver into a database associated with the on-line registration server; and
transferring the related information upon receipt of the unique identifier.

34. A method of linking data to a document comprising the steps of:
receiving an electronic copy of the document;
steganographically-encoding a unique identifier into the electronic copy of the document;
receiving information related to the proprietor of the document into a database and associating the received data with the unique identifier; and
transferring the related information upon receipt of the unique identifier.

35. A method comprising the steps of:
decoding steganographically-encoded data from a document;
querying a look-up table to determine a web-site corresponding to the steganographically-encoded data; and
accessing the web site to obtain data relating to a proprietor of the document.

36. A method comprising:
presenting a business card of an individual to an optical sensor, the optical sensor producing output data;
decoding steganographically-encoded plural-bit data from the sensor output data; and

using said plural-bit data to establish a link to an internet address having data relating to the proprietor of said business card.

37. The method of claim 36, which includes obtaining from said internet site calendar data detailing certain activities of the individual.

38. The method of claim 37 in which the amount of calendar data obtained depends on an authorization level.

39. The method of claim 38 in which the authorization level is reflected in the plural-bit data encoded in the individual's business card, wherein an individual can distribute differently-encoded cards to different recipients, to grant the recipients different access rights to said calendar data.

40. The method of claim 36 in which the optical sensor is a business card reader that also serves to input textual information from business cards into a personal information manager.